

THE BIG READ IS COMING TO MILTON-FREEWATER

The Big Read is coming to Milton-Freewater, and Free books are just part of the plan. Sponsored by the National Endowment For the Arts, the purpose of The Big Read is to encourage Americans to read more. Studies show that Americans of all ages and education levels are reading less than they used to. While library use in Milton-Freewater has increased substantially since the new library building opened in 2003, there is always room for improvement. The Big Read is part of that.

The Big Read will begin locally this Friday, February 29, in the Albee Room of the library at 7:00 p.m. Library Director Bob Jones will explain the program, and Free copies of the novel *The Joy Luck Club*, by Amy Tan, will be given away. Door prizes will be given away, too. Participants are encouraged to read the book during the month of March, and a series of programs related to the book will follow in April and May. The library has received 288 copies of the book, which will be distributed, beginning Friday evening, on a first-come, first-served basis. There is a limit of one book per person. Reader's Guides, bookmarks, Teacher's Guides, and CD copies of a two-part Audio Guide to the book also are being given away. Quantities of each item are limited.

Eastern Oregon is one of six areas in the United States promoting the reading of *The Joy Luck Club* for The Big Read. The others are Bridgeport, Connecticut; Parsippany, New Jersey; Seymour, Indiana; Owensboro, Kentucky; and Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Eight communities in the Libraries of Eastern Oregon (LEO) region are participating. In addition to Milton-Freewater they are Baker City, Lakeview, Hermiston, La Grande, Condon, Fossil, and Heppner.

Following the kick-off event, copies of each item will be available at the library during regular library hours while supplies last. The library is open Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m., Thursday and Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment For the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest. In the Pacific Northwest it also is supported in part by a grant from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation. Libraries of Eastern Oregon is one of 127 local agencies conducting Big Read programs across the country this spring.